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UFO claims spaced-out?

LONDON — (AP) — UFO buffs resort to hoaxes, fraud and advertising tricks to win respectability for their belief in unidentified flying objects, an American space specialist says in a prize-winning essay published here.

The techniques of "illogical persuasion" are regrettable because a more scientific approach might reveal that there really are alien visitors to Earth, writes James Oberg, 34, an engineer at NASA's Mission Control Center in Houston.

Oberg's attack on the unscientific approach to UFOs won him a \$2,200 prize in an essay contest held by the weekly British journal New Scientist.

His article, which appears in this week's edition of the journal, says "ufology" — the

study of reports of unidentified flying objects — suffers from "an extremely cavalier attitude toward verification of data."

UFOLOGISTS resort to "all the traditional tricks of the Madison Avenue advertising executive's trade" such as claims that "the universe is so large that other civilizations must exist out there," and "most Americans now believe in UFOs."

But, Oberg says, not one UFO report provides conclusive evidence of space visitors, despite the many unexplained sightings.

Apart from his job with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Oberg is a writer on space science and a member of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal.

sound off

Does Earth get alien visitors?

While claiming that UFO buffs resort to hoaxes and frauds to win respectability for their beliefs, an American space specialist who works at NASA says he thinks a scientific approach might reveal that there really are alien visitors to Earth. Do you believe there are?



How you voted

YES, 72.7 percent. COMMENTS: "I've believed that since 1917". . . "How could anyone think otherwise?". . . "There has to be other life somewhere in this universe. I'd hate to think we're the best". . . "How else can you explain all the UFO sightings". . . "It's possible."

NO, 27.3 percent. COMMENTS: "If there are really aliens, why don't they just land and say hello". . . "And I'm Mr. Spock". . . "This guy is goofy". . . "A NASA employee shouldn't lower himself to this level."

Sound off is a non-scientific poll intended to give Free Press readers a chance to express their opinions. Today's percentages are based on approximately 250 calls.

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